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THE
AGE OF REASON.

IN TWO PARTS.

BY THOMAS PAINE.

NEW-YORK:
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SLON
V. 1935

TO MY
FELLOW CITIZENS
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

I put the following work under your protection. It contains my opinion upon religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow citizen,

THOMAS PAINE.

Luxembourg, (Paris,) 8th Pulvoise,
Second year of the French Republic, one and
indivisible.

January 27, O. S. 1794.

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THE
AGE OF REASON.

PART I.

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon religion ; I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject, and from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow citizens of all nations, and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it, could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood, and of every thing appertaining to compulsive systems of religion, and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary, lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine ; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more : and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise; they have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and in order to qualify himself for that trade he begins with perjury. Can we conceive any thing more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet "Common Sense," in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a revolution in the system of government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state, wherever it had taken place, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, had so effectually prohibited by pains and penalties every discussion

upon established creeds, and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed, those principles could not be brought fairly and openly before the world ; but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priest-craft would be detected ; and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses ; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints ; and the Turks their Mahomet, as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of these churches show certain books, which they call revelation or the word of God. The Jews say, that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face ; the Christians say, that their word of God came by divine inspiration ; and the Turks say, that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of these churches accuse the other of unbelief ; and for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will before I proceed further into the subject, offer some other observations on the word revelation. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated immediately from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is a revelation to the first person only, and hearsay to every other, and consequently they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas, to call any *thing* a revelation that comes to us at second

hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication—after this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; for it was not a revelation made to me, and I have only his word for it that it was made to him.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the tables of the commandments from the hands of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for believing it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them; they contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a lawgiver, or legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.*

When I am told that the Koran was written in heaven, and brought to Mahomet by an angel, the account comes too near the same kind of hearsay evidence and second hand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and therefore I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman called the Virgin Mary, said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evidence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this—for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves; it is only reported by others that they said so—it is hearsay upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ

* It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; it is contrary to every principle of moral justice.

being the Son of God. He was born when the heathen mytholgy had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten: the intercourse of gods with women was the familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with hundreds; the story therefore had nothing in it either new, wonderful, or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called the Gentiles or Mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the christian church, sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods that followed was no other than a reduction of their former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand; the statute of Mary succeeded the statute of Diana of Ephesus; the deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints; the mythologists had gods for every thing; the church became as crowded with the one, as the pantheon had been with the other; and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient Mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud.

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by

Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before ; by the quakers since ; and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage or any thing else ; not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his own writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people ; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story would have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told, exceeds every thing that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity ; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be credited, they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those

all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection ; and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. So neither will I, and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.

It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know, as it is for us to be assured, that the books in which the account is related, were written by the persons whose names they bear ; the best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say, it is not true. It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It is just the same as if a man were to say, I will prove the truth of what I have told you, by producing the people who say it is false.

That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man ; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests, and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priesthood. The accusation which those priests brought against him, was that of sedition and conspiracy against the Roman Government, to which the Jews were then subject and tributary ; and it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehensions of the effects of his doctrine as well as the Jewish priests ; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life.

It is upon this plain narrative of facts, together with another case I am going to mention, that the christian mythologists, calling themselves the christian church, have erected their fable, which for absurdity and extravagance is not exceeded by any thing that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients.

The ancient Mythologists tell us that the race of giants made war against Jupiter, and that one of them threw an hundred rocks against him at one throw; that Jupiter defeated him with thunder, and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna, and that every time the giant turns himself, Mount Etna belches fire.

It is here easy to see that the circumstance of the mountain, that of its being a volcano, suggested the idea of the fable; and that the fable is made to fit and wind itself up with that circumstance.

The Christian Mythologists tell us that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him, and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the story of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan.

Thus far the ancient and the christian Mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount Etna; and in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the traditions of the Jews; for the christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology, and partly from the Jewish traditions.

The christian Mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again, to bring on the sequel of the fable. He is then introduced into the Garden of Eden in the shape of a snake or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is no way surprised to hear a snake talk; and the issue of the *tele-a-tele* is, that he persuades her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damns all mankind.

After giving Satan this triumph over the whole creation, one would have supposed that the church Mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back again to the pit ; or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain) or have put him *under* a mountain, as the former Mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women, and doing more mischief. But instead of this, they leave him at large, without even obliging him to give his parole—the secret of which is, that they could not do without him ; and after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipation, nine-tenths of the world beside, and Mahomet into the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian mythology ?

Having thus made an insurrection and a battle in Heaven, in which none of the combatants could be either killed or wounded—put Satan into the pit—let him out again—given him a triumph over the whole creation—damned all mankind by the eating of an apple, these Christian Mythologists bring the two ends of their fable together. They represent this virtuous and amiable man, Jesus Christ, to be at once both God and Man, and also the Son of God, celestially begotten, on purpose to be sacrificed, because they say that Eve in her longing had eaten an apple.

Putting aside every thing that might excite laughter by its absurdity or detestation by its profaneness, and confining ourselves merely to an examination of the parts, it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the almighty, more inconsistent with his wisdom, more contradictory to his power, than this story is.

In order to make for it a foundation to rise upon, the inventors were under the necessity of giving to the being, whom they call Satan, a power equally as great, if not greater than they attribute to the Almighty. They have not only given him the power of *liberating himself* from the pit, after what they

call his fall, but they have made that power increase afterwards to infinity. Before this fall they represent him only as an angel of limited existence, as they represent the rest. After his fall, he becomes, by their account, omnipresent. He exists everywhere, and at the same time. He occupies the whole immensity of space.

Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the *direct necessity* either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan, or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth, and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man.

Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way, that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit *himself* on a cross, in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for his new transgression, the story would have been less absurd—less contradictory. But instead of this they make the transgressor triumph and the Almighty fall.

that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake, the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable, that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

I know not that this bold investigation will alarm many, but it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it upon that account; the times and the subject demand it to be done.—The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian church is fabulous, is becoming very extensive in all countries; and it will be a consolation to men staggering under that suspicion, and doubting what to believe and what to disbelieve, to see the subject freely investigated. I therefore pass on to an examination of the books called the Old and New Testament.

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation (which by the by is a book of riddles that requires a revelation to explain it) are, we are told, the word of God. It is, therefore, proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give to the report. The answer to this question is, that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically appears to be as follows:—

When the church Mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testaments, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by vote which of the books out of the collection they had made, should be the word of God, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful,

such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise—for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of, they called themselves by the general name of the Church; and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing those books to be the word of God than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come, in the next place, to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this Essay, I have spoken of revelation—I now proceed further with that subject, for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something, which the person, to whom that thing is revealed, did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it, or to enable me to tell it, or to write it.

Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to any thing done upon earth, of which man is himself the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and therefore is not the word of God.

When Sampson ran off with the gateposts of Gaza, if he ever did so, (and whether he did or not is nothing to us,) or when he visited his Delilah, or caught his foxes, or did any thing else, what has revelation to do with these things? If they were facts, he could tell them himself; or his secretary, if he kept one, could write them, if they were worth either telling or writing; and if they were fictions, revelation could not make them true; and whether true or not, we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them. When we contemplate the im

mensity of that Being, who directs and governs the incomprehensible whole, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel shame at calling such paltry stories the word of God.

As to the account of the creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt; and after their departure from that country, they put it at the head of their history, without telling (as it is most probable) that they did not know how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens, shews it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly: it is nobody that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither first, second, or third person; it has every criterion of being a tradition; it has no voucher. Moses does not take it upon himself by introducing it with the formality that he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying."

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the Creation, I am at a loss to conceive. Moses, I believe, was too good a judge of such subjects to put his name to that account. He had been educated among the Egyptians, who were a people as well skilled in science, and particularly in astronomy, as any people of their day; and the silence and caution that Moses observes, in not authenticating the account, is a good negative evidence that he neither told it nor believed it—The case is, that every nation of people has been world-makers, and the Israelites had as much right to set up the trade of world-making as any of the rest; and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition. The account, however, is harmless; and this is more than can be said of many other parts of the Bible.

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a Demon,

than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it as I detest every thing that is cruel.

We scarcely meet with any thing, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible. In the anonymous publications, the Psalms, and the book of Job, more particularly in the latter, we find a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of the Almighty; but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well before that time as since.

The Proverbs which are said to be Solomon's, though most probably a collection (because they discover a knowledge of life which his situation excluded him from knowing) are an instructive table of ethics. They are inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin.

All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works

There is not, throughout the whole book called the Bible, any word that describes to us what we call a poet, nor any word that describes what we call poetry. The case is, that the word prophet, to which latter times have affixed a new idea, was the bible word for poet, and the word prophesying meant the art of making poetry. It also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music.

We read of prophesying with pipes, tabrets, and horns—of prophesying with harps, with psalteries, with cymbals, and with every other instrument of music then in fashion. Were we now to speak of prophesying with a fiddle, or with a pipe and tabor, the expression would have no meaning, or would appear ridiculous, and to some people contemptuous, because we have changed the meaning of the word.

We are told of Saul being among the prophets, and also that he prophesied; but we are not told what they prophesied nor what he prophesied. The case is, there was nothing to tell; for these prophets were a company of musicians and poets, and Saul joined in the concert, and this was called prophesying.

and often extravagant, and not admissible in any other kind of writing than poetry.

To shew that these writings are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables, as they stand in the book, and make a line of the same number of syllables (heroic measure) that shall rhyme with the last word. It will then be seen that the composition of those books is poetical measure. The instance I shall produce is from Isaiah :—

“Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth !”

’Tis God himself that calls attention forth.

Another instance I shall quote is from the mournful Jeremiah, to which I shall add two other lines, for the purpose of carrying out the figure, and shewing the intention of the poet.

“O ! that mine head were waters and mine eyes”

Were fountains, flowing like the liquid skies ;

Then would I give the mighty flood release,

And weep a deluge for the human race.

The account given of this affair, in the book called Samuel, is, that Saul met a company of prophets, a whole company of them ! coming down with a psaltery, a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and that they prophesied, and that he prophesied with them. But it appears afterwards, that Saul prophesied badly; that is, performed his part badly ; for it is said, that an "evil spirit from God" * came upon Saul, and he prophesied.

Now, were there no other passage in the book, called the Bible, than this, to demonstrate to us that we have lost the original meaning of the word prophesy, and substituted another meaning in its place, this alone would be sufficient ? for it is impossible to use and apply the word prophesy, in the place it is here used and applied, if we give to it the sense which latter times have affixed to it. The manner in which it is here used strips it of all religious meaning, and shews that a man might then be a prophet, or might prophecy, as he may now be a poet or musician, without any regard to the morality or immorality of his character. The word was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and to music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised.

Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted any thing, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name, in celebration of an act already done. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician, and was also reputed to be (though perhaps very erroneously) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not called prophets ; it does not appear from any accounts we have, that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater

* As those men, who call themselves divines and commentators, are very fond of puzzling one another, I leave them to contest the meaning of the first part of the phrase, that of an evil spirit of God. I keep to my text—I keep to the meaning of the word prophesy.

of knowledge, (for it has nothing to do with the creation of knowledge,) it is only in the living languages that new knowledge is to be found; and certain it is, that, in general, a youth will learn more of a living language in one year, than of a dead language in seven; and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself. The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their being dead, and the pronunciation entirely lost. It would be the same thing with any other language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists, does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian ploughman did, or a Grecian milkmaid; and the same for the Latin, compared with a ploughman or milkmaid of the Romans, it would therefore be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

The apology that is sometimes made for continuing to teach the dead languages is, that they are taught at a time, when a child is not capable of exerting any other mental faculty than that of memory; but this is altogether erroneous. The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge, and to the things connected with it. The first and favorite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is to imitate the works of man. It builds houses with cards or sticks; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat, or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.

But the apology that is now made for continuing to teach the dead languages, could not be the cause, at first, of cutting down learning to the narrow and humble sphere of linguistry; the cause, therefore, must be sought for elsewhere. In all researches of

this kind, the best evidence that can be produced, is the internal evidence the thing carries with itself, and the evidence of circumstances that unites with it; both of which, in this case, are not difficult to be discovered.

Putting then aside, as a matter of distinct consideration, the outrage offered to the moral justice of God, by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also for the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of a man; in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam: putting, I say, those things aside, as a matter of distinct consideration, it is certain that what is called the christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation—the strange story of Eve—the snake and the apple—the ambiguous idea of a man-god—the corporeal idea of the death of a god—the mythological idea of a family of Gods, and the Christian system of arithmetic, that three are one, and one is three, are all irreconcilable, not only to the divine gift of reason, that God hath given to man, but to the knowledge

is classed under two heads—anecdote and epistolary correspondence.

The four books already mentioned, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place.—They tell what Jesus Christ did and said, and what others did and said to him; and in several instances they relate the same event differently. Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to those books; not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the persons who saw them done, nor to the relating and recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it. The book called the Acts of the Apostles (an anonymous work) belongs also to the anecdotal part.

All the other parts of the New Testament, except the book of enigmas, called the Revelations, are a collection of letters under the name of epistles; and the forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world, that the probability is at least equal, whether they are genuine or forged. One thing, however, is much less equivocal, which is, that out of the matter contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has kept up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue, in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

The invention of purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom, by prayers, bought from the church with money; the selling of pardons, dispensations, and indulgencies, are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance.—But the case nevertheless is, that those things derive their origin from the paroxysm of the crucifixion and the theory deduced therefrom, which was, that one person could stand in the place of another, and could perform meritorious services for him.—The probability, therefore, is, that the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption (*which is said to have been accomplished by the act*

Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in flames.

Latter times have laid all the blame on the Goths and Vandals ; but, however unwilling the partizans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true, that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system.— There was more knowledge in the world before that period, than for many centuries afterwards ; and as to religious knowledge, the Christian system, as already said, was only another species of mythology ; and the mythology to which it succeeded was a corruption of an ancient system of theism.*

*It is impossible for us to know at what time the heathen mythology began ; but it is certain, from the internal evidence that it carries, that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended. All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention. The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called the heathen mythology, and was so far a species of

Canaan; and consequently it could not be he that said what the children of Israel did, or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses, as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Joshua, chap. v. ver. 12. *"And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."*

There is a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy; which, while it shows that Moses was not the writer of that book, shows also the erroneous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Bashan, ver. 11. *"For only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the race of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man"* A cubit is 1 foot 9 8/10ths inches; the length, therefore, of the bed was 16 feet 4 inches, and the breadth 7 feet 4 inches; thus much for the giant's bed. Now for the historical part, which, though the evidence is not so direct and positive as in the former cases, it is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better than the best evidence on the contrary side.

The writer, by way of proving the existence of this giant, refers to his bed as an *ancient relict*, and says, *is it not in Rabbath (or Rabbah) of the children of Ammon?* meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this

itself. Every man is an evidence to himself, that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence, that carries us on, as it were by necessity, to the belief of a first cause externally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason, that man can discover God. Take away that reason, and he would be incapable of understanding any thing; and in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts in the book called the Bible, that convey to us any idea of God, are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm; I recollect no other. Those parts are true deistical compositions; for they treat of the Deity through his works. They take the book of creation as the work of God; they refer to no other book, and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert in this place, the 19th Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it.

The spacious firmament on high,
 With all the blue etherial sky,
 And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
 The great original proclaim.
 The unwearied sun from day to day,
 Does his Creators power display,
 And publishes to every land,
 The work of an Almighty hand.
 Soon as the evening shades prevail,
 The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
 And nightly to the list'ning earth,
 Repeats the story of her birth;
 Whilst all the stars that round her burn,

And all the planets, in their turn,
 Confirm the tidings as they roll,
 And spread the truth from pole to pole.
 What though in solemn silence all
 Move round this dark terrestrial ball;
 What though no real voice, nor sound,
 Amidst their radiant orbs be found,
 In reason's ear they all rejoice,
 And utter forth a glorious voice,
 Forever singing as they shine,
 The hand that made us is divine.

What more does man want to know than that the hand, or power that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have all of them the same tendency with this Psalm; that of deducing or proving a truth, that would be otherwise unknown from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passage in Job, to insert them correctly; but there is one occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions, that admit of distinct answers.

First—Canst thou by searching find out God? Yes; because in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by searching into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is, that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly—Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? No; not only because the power and wisdom He has manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold, is to me incomprehensible, but because even this manifestation, great as it is,

sciences, human invention ; it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles, he can only discover them.

For example—Every person who looks at an almanac sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance, were any church on earth to say, that those laws are a human invention. It would also be ignorance, or something worse, to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are an human invention. Man cannot invent any thing that is eternal and immutable ; and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or they could not be used as they are to ascertain the time when, and the manner how an eclipse will take place.

The scientific principle that man employs to obtain the foreknowledge of an eclipse, or of any thing else, relating to the motion of the heavenly bodies, are contained chiefly in that part of science which is called Trigonometry, or the properties of a triangle, which when applied to the study of the heavenly bodies, is called Astronomy ; when applied to direct the course of a ship on the ocean, it is called Navigation ; when applied to the construction of figures drawn by rule and compass, it is called Geometry ; when applied to the construction of plans for edifices it is called Architecture ; when applied to the measurement of any portion of the surface of the earth, it is called Land-surveying. In fine it is the soul of science ; it is an eternal truth ; it contains the mathematical demonstration of which man speaks, and the extent of its uses is unknown.

It may be said, that man can make or draw a tri-

"And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, which remaineth unto this day," that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the 10th chapter, where after speaking of the five Kings whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes, and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said, c. xv. ver. 63. "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day." The question upon this passage is, at what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? As this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations till I come to that part.

Having thus shewn from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and consequently without authority, I proceed, as before-mentioned, to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and therefore even the pretence is wanting to call it in the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins chap. i. ver. 1, *Now after the death of Moses, &c.* and this of Judges begins, *Now after the death of Joshua, &c.* This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author; but who he was, is altogether unknown: the only point that the book proves is, that the author lived long after the time of Joshua; for though it begins as if it followed immediately after his death, the second chapter is an epitome or abstract of the whole book, which according to the Bible chronology, extends its history through a space of 306 years; that is, from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Sampson, 1120 years before

cannot give to matter that invisible agency, by which all the component parts of the immense machine of the universe have influence upon each other and act in motional unison together, without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imitation of teeth and cogs. All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch; but could he gain a knowledge of that agency, so as to be able to apply it in practice, we might then say, that another canonical book of the word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle; for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steel-yard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from, (one point of that line being in the fulcrum,) the line it descends to, and the chord of the arc, which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the correspond-

i-diameters join ; for the two wheels scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all knowledge of science is derived, and it is from knowledge that all the arts have originated. X

The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has taught man to study and to imitation. It is as if he said to the inhabitants of this globe, that weours, "I have made an earth for man to dwell on, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible to teach him science and the arts. He can provide for his own comfort, and learn from munificence to all, to be kind to each other."

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that the eye is endowed with the power of gazing to an incomprehensible distance, an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the north star, with the moving orbs he has named Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, whose uses are to follow from their being visible? His power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if the immensity he now possesses were only to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens, as the book and school of science, that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the sublimity in this light, he sees an additional motive for gazing, that nothing was made in vain ; for in vain would be this power of vision, if it taught man nothing.

As the Christian system of faith has made a revolution in theology, so also has it made a revolution in the state of learning. That which is now called learning was not learning originally. Learning does not consist, as the schools now make it consist, in

him, and said unto him, ver. 18, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the *seer's house* is?" and Samuel answered Saul and said, *I am the seer.*"

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers, in the language or manner of speaking used in the time they are said to have been spoken; and as the manner of speaking was out of use when this author wrote, he found it necessary, in order to make the story understood, to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken; and he does this in the 9th verse, where he says, "*before-time*, in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet was *before-time* called a seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written, and consequently that Samuel did not write it, and that the book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books, the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. Samuel died before Saul; for the 1st Samuel, ch. xxi. ver. 33.

The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names are Mercury, Venus, this world that we call ours Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star, and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after, or rise before the Sun, which, in either case, is never more than three hours.

The Sun, as before said, being the centre, the planet or world, nearest the Sun, is Mercury; his distance from the Sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round in a circle always at that distance from the Sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the tract in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus, she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars, he is distant from the Sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter, he is distant from the Sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn, he is distant from the Sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles, or orbits, of all the other worlds or planets.

The space, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space, that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform their revolutions in round the Sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or circle, in which Saturn moves round the Sun, which being double his distance from the Sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles: and its circular extent is near five thousand million; and its globical content is

minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings, and the two books of Chronicles. Those books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and actions of the Jewish kings, who in general were a parcel of rascals; but these are matters with which we have no more concern, than we have with the Roman emperors, or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those works are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and of fact, and of probable and of improbable things; but which, distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books, will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to shew the confu-

ter bring the history 52 years more forward, that is, to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall shew when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David, and Solomon, who reigned over all Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of seventeen kings and one queen, who are styled kings of Judah, and of nineteen who are styled kings of Israel; for the Jewish nation immediately on the death of Solomon split into two parties, who chose separate kings and who carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

Those two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practice on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded, under a pretended gift from God, they afterwards practised as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and in some instances whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor, who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months, or less, shared the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings, an account is given of two baskets full of children's heads, 70 in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city; they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the orders of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel, on purpose to commit this bloody deed, and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Manaham, one of the kings of Israel who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it is said, 2 Kings, chap. xv. ver. 16, that Manaham smote the city of Tipshah, because they opened not the city to him, and all the women that were therein that were with child they ripped up.

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of his chosen people, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and

not such a nation of ruffians and cut-throats as the ancient Jews were; a people, who, corrupted by and copying after, such monsters and impostors as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, and David, had distinguished themselves above all others, on the face of the known earth, for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes, and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that the flattering appellation of his chosen people is no other than a lie, which the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented, to cover the baseness of their own characters; and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of the Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes; but the history is broken in several places, by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings; and in this, as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah to kings of Israel, and from kings of Israel to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book the history sometimes contradicts itself; for example, in the second book of Kings, chap. i. ver. 8, we are told, but in

xiii.) that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre, where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down, (ver. 21,) "touched the bones of Elisha, and he (the dead man) revived and stood upon his feet." The story does not tell us whether they buried the man notwithstanding he revived and stood upon his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories, the writer of Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day, who did not choose to be accused of lying, or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But however these two historians may differ from each other with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men styled prophets, whose writings fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these historians are speaking of that reign; but except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even their existence hinted at; tho', according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written; some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are

Table of the Prophets, with the time
lived before Christ, and also be-
Kings and Chronicles were writ

NAMES.	Years before Christ.	Years before Kings and Chronicles.
Isaiah	760	172
Jeremiah . . .	629	41
Ezekiel	595	7
Daniel	607	19
Hosea	785	97
Joel	800	212
Amos	789	199
Obadiah	789	199
Jonah	862	274
Micah	750	162
Nahum	713	125
Habakkuk	620	38
Zephaniah	630	42
Haggai	} after the year 588	
Zachariah		
Malachi		

This table is either not very honorable historians, or not very honorable prophets; and I leave to priests, and who are very learned in little third point of etiquette between the two reason, why the authors of Kings

* In 2 Kings, chap. xiv. ver. 25, nah is mentioned on account of the tract of land by Jeroboam; but no said of him, nor is any allusion made Jonah, to his expedition to Nineveh counter with the whale.

...series of the same kind.
But however these two historians
each other with respect to the tales re
they are silent alike with respect to th
prophets, whose writings fill up th
the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the
kiah, is mentioned in Kings, and ag
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reign; but except in one or two insta
and those very slightly, none of the res
as spoken of, or even their existence hi
according to the Bible chronology, the
in the time those histories were writte
them long before. If those prophets,
called, were men of such importance in
as the compilers of the Bible, and priest
mentators have since represented them
can it be accounted for, that not one of t
ries should say any thing about them?

The history in the books of Kings an
cles is brought forward, as I have alread
the year 588 before Christ; it will the
proper to examine which of these proph
before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets:
times in which they lived before Christ, a
to the Chronology affixed to the first cl.
each of the books of the prophets: and al
number of years they lived before
Kings...

cast it up in their sight, of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil instead of a prophet? or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Ninevah, and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to be the devil, and Jonah one of his imps?

The most extraordinary of all things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain; and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple, and showing him and promising to him *all the kingdoms of the world*. How happened it that he did not discover America; or is it only with *kingdoms* that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ, to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself; neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as is sometimes practised upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings, and collectors of relics and antiquities; or to render the belief of miracles, ridiculous, by outdoing miracles, as Don Quixote outdid chivalry; or to embarrass the belief of miracles, by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or the Devil, any thing called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true; for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle, than to a principle evidently moral, without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man, to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead therefore of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion be-

the children of
have shewn that as this verse is verba
as in Chronicles, chap. i. ver. 43, wh
consistently with the order of histo
Genesis it does not, that the verse in t
a great part of the 36th chapter, have
from Chronicles; and that the book
though it is placed first in the Bible, a
to Moses, has been manufactured by som
person, after the book of Chronicles w
which was not until at least eight hundr
ty years after the time of Moses.

The evidence I proceed by to substant
regular, and has in it but two stages.
have already stated, that the passage in G
fers itself for time to Chronicles⁴; secondly
book of Chronicles, to which this passage
self, was not begun to be written until at l
hundred and sixty years after the time o
To prove this, we have only to look into
teenth verse of the third chapter of the fir
Chronicles, where the writer in giving th
ogy of the descendants of David, mentio
kiah; and it was in the time of Zedek
Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 5
before Christ, and consequently more than
after Moses. Those who have superstitiou
ed of the antiquity of the Bible, and partic
the books ascribed to Moses, have done
examination, and without

whether it had been revealed to him, or whether he conceived it; and if the thing he prophesied, or intended to prophesy, should happen, or something like it, among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew it, or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary; and the safe side of the case is, to guard against being imposed upon by not giving credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophecy, are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion. They are the means by which so many *Lo heres!* and *Lo theres!* have been spread about the world, and religion been made into a trade. The success of one imposter gave encouragement to another, and the quieting salvo of doing *some good* by keeping up a *pious fraud*, protected them from remorse.

Having now extended the subject to a greater length than I first intended, I shall bring it to a close by abstracting a summary from the whole.

First—That the idea or belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for reason already assigned.—These reasons, among many others, are the want of an universal language: the mutability of language: the errors to which translations are subject; the possibility of totally suppressing such a word: the

build
Lord
is the
Jerusa

The last verse in Chronicles is and ends in the middle of a phrase, without signifying to what phrase it belongs, and the appearance of the break, and the appearance of the different books, show, as I have said, disorder and ignorance in which they were put together, and that the compilers have no authority for what they were doing, and no authority for believing what they

* I observed, as I passed along, and senseless passages in the Bible, and in the body of the work; such as that, 1 xiii. ver. 1, where it is said, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years, Saul closed him three thousand men." The first part of the verse that Saul reigned has no sense, since it does not tell us what happened, nor say any thing of what happened that one year; and it is besides, mere nonsense, to say he reigned one year, when the very next verse says he had reigned two; for if he had reigned two, it was impossible not to have reigned three. Another instance occurs in Joshua, where the writer tells us a story of an angel appearing unto Joshua (the table of contents at the head of the chapter appearing abruptly and abruptly).

THE
AGE OF REASON.

PART THE SECOND.

second chapter of Ezra, the w
the tribes and families, and of
of souls of each that returned
rusalem ; and this enrolment
turned, appears to have been o
objects for writing the book ; bu
error that destroys the intention

The writer begins his enrolme
manner :—chap. ii. ver. 3. “Th
rosh, two thousand one hundred.
Verse 4, “The children of Shep
dred seventy and two.” And in
proceeds through all the families
verse he makes a total, and says, t
gation together was forty and tw
hundred and three score.

But whoever will take the trou
the several particulars, will find
but 29,818 ; so that the error is 12
tainty then can there be in the Bib

* Particulars of the families from t
ter of Ezra.

Chap. ii.	
Verse 3	2172
4	372
5	775
6	2812
”	

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins as in Ezra, by saying, chap. vii. ver. 8, "The children of Parosh, two thousand three hundred and seventy two; and so on through all the families. The list differs in several of the particulars, from that of Ezra. In the 66th verse Nehemiah makes a total, and says as Ezra had said, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and three score." But the particulars of this list make a total but of 31,069, so that the error here is 11,271. These writers may do well enough for Bible makers, but not for any thing where truth and exactness is necessary. The next book in course is the book of Esther. If Madam Esther thought it any honor to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashy, who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of (for the account says, they had been drinking seven days, and were merry,) let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours; at least it is none of mine; besides which the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

Bro't forward	16,791		
Ver. 17	323	31	1254
18	112	32	320
19	223	33	725
20	95	34	345
21	123	35	3630
22	56	36	973
23	128	37	1052
24	42	38	1247
25	743	39	1017
26	621	40	74
27	122	41	128
28	223	42	139
29	52	58	392
30	156	60	652

Total, 29,815

signed man he is capable of being. But but a small share in the character of th whom the book treats ; on the contrary is sometimes impetuous ; but he still ex keep a guard upon it, and seems determini midst of accumulating ills, to impose up the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner c of Job in the former part of the Age of R without knowing at that time what I hav since ; which is, that from all the evidenc be collected, the book of Job does not bel Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew tators, Abenezra and Spinosa, upon this they both say that the book of Job carries nal evidence of being an Hebrew book ; genius of the composition, and the dram piece, are not Hebrew ; that it has been t from another language into Hebrew, and author of the book was a Gentile ; that th ter represented under the name of Satan (the first and only time this name is so ment the Bible,) does not correspond to any iden ; and that the two convocations which ity supposed to have made of those, whom em calls sons of God, and the familiarit this supposed Satan is stated to have with ity are in the same case.

It may also be observed, that the book sl self to be the production of a mind culti science, which the Jew

dramatical : the writer opens the subject by a short introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses in the act of speaking, and when he has made Moses finish his harrangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book : from the first verse of the first chapter, to the end of the fifth verse, it is the writer who speaks ; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harrangue, and this continues to the end of the 47th verse of the fourth chapter ; here the writer stops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again in the first verse of the fifth chapter, though it is only by saying, that Moses called the people of Israel together ; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 26th chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the 27th chapter ; and continues Moses, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 28th chapter. At the 29th chapter the writer speaks again through the whole of the first verse, and the first line of the second verse, when he introduces Moses for the last time, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 33d chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter ; he begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah ; that he saw from thence the land which (he writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; that he, Moses, died there, in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day ; that is, unto the time in which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us, that Moses was 110 years of age when he died—that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated ; and he

Joshua, to Samuel, &c. those are books of *testimony*, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and therefore the whole of our belief, as to the authenticity of these books, rests, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first that is, we may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony; in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case, and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible; such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man. The greater part of the other ancient books are works of *genius* of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, &c. Here again the author is not an essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now, were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true—for it is the poet only that is admired; and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors (Moses for instance) as we disbelieve the thing related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses in our estimation, but an impostor. As to the ancient historians from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no further: for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespasian, that of curing a lame man and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracle cited by Jo-

sephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red Sea in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible; whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and therefore the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our belief of the Bible, because that we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since we believe the things stated in these writings no further than they are probable and credible, or because they are self-evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve them because they are sedate, like Plato; or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised these things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible, and begin with what are called the five books of Moses. *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to show that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and for the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses, as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only.—Were I to refer for proof to any of the ancient authors, whom the advocates of the Bible call profane authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible.

lived, as I shall show in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology which I use is the Bible chronology; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of any thing; but to make the Bible itself prove, historically and chronologically that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is therefore proper that I inform the reader, (such an one at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it,) that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology, printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and consequently the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In the 14th chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken, came to Abraham, he armed all his household, and marched to rescue Lot from the captors; and that he pursued them unto Din, (ver. 14.)

To show in what manner this expression of *pursuing them unto Din*, applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances, the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New-York, in America, was originally New-Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Murat, was before called Havre de Grace. New-Amsterdam was changed to New-York in the year 1664; Havre de Grace to Havre Murat in the year 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New-York should be mentioned, it would be certain evidence that such a writing could not have been written before, and must have been written after New-Amsterdam was changed to New-York, and, consequently, not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of

that year. And, in like manner, any dateless writing, with the name of Havre Marat, would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been written after Havre de Grace became Havre Murat, and consequently not till after the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to show that there was no such place as *Dan*, till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently, that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto *Dan* is given.

The place that is called *Dan* in the Bible, was originally a town of the Gentiles, called *Laish*; and when the tribe of *Dan* seized upon this town, they changed its name to *Dan*, in commemoration of *Dan*, who was the father of that tribe, and the great grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis to the 25th chapter of the book called the book of Judges. It is there said (ver. 27) *that they (the Danites) come unto Laish to a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword (the Bible is filled with murder) and burned the city with fire; and they built a city, (ver. 23) and dwelt therein, and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan, their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.*

This account of the Danites taking possession of *Laish* and changing it to *Dan*, is placed in the book of Judges, immediately after the death of Sampson. The death of Sampson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451, before Christ; and therefore according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called *Dan* till 331 years after the death of Moses.

There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the book of Judges. The five last chapters, as they stand in the book 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 23 years before the 16th chapter, 266 before the 15th, 245 before the 13th, 196 before the 9th, 80

...in the histo
I shall begin with those two, rese
to say on the general character
prophets to another part of the w

Whoever will take the troubl
book ascribed to Isaiah, will find i
wild and disorderly compositions e
it has neither beginning, middle
cept a short historical part, and a
history in two or three of the first
continued incoherent, bombastical
travagant metaphor, without appli
tute of meaning; a school boy
have been excusable for writing suc
least in the translation) - that kind
and false taste, that is properly called

The historical part begins in the
and is continued to the end of the 39
relates to some matters that are said
during the reign of Hezekiah, king
which time Isaiah lived. This fragm
begins and ends abruptly; it has not
nexion with the chapter that precede
that which follows it, nor with any other
It is probable that Isaiah wrote this fr
self, because he was an actor in the ci
it treats of; but, except this part, there
two chapters that have any connexion
other; one is entitled, at the beginn
verse. the book

itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date, and serves to excite the two ideas at once; and this manner of speaking by circumstances, implies as positively that the fact alluded to is *past*, as if it was so expressed. When a person, speaking upon any matter, says, it was before I was married, or before my son was born, or before I went to America, or before I went to France, it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he has been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense; and whenever such an expression is found anywhere it can only be understood in the sense in which only it could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted—"that these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned *any* king over the children of Israel," could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and consequently, that the book of Genesis, so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage; but the expression, *any* king, implies more kings than one, at least it implies two, and this will carry it to the time of David; and, if taken in a general sense, it carries itself through all the times of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that *professed* to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case; the two books of Chronicles, which gave a history of all the kings of Israel, are *professed* y; as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began; and this verse that I have quoted, and all the remaining verses of the 35th chap. of Genesis, are, word for word, in the 1st chap. of Chronicles, beginning at the 43d verse.

It was with consistency that the writer of the Chronicles could say, as he has said, 1st Chron. chap. i. ver. 43, *These are the kings that reigned in*

Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel, because he was going to give, and has given, a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as any thing can be proved from historical language that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop's Fables, admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of Chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon, and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that this is the word of God, has stood and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian Tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to 8 and 900 years, becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the Mythology.

Besides, the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretence of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance.

When the Jewish army returned from one of their plundering and murdering excursions, the account goes as follows, Numb. chap. xxxi. ver. 13. "And Moses and Eleazer the priest, and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive?* behold these caused the children of Israel, through the council of Balaam, to

commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him; but all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters!!

Let any mother put herself into the situation of those mothers; one child murdered, another destined to violation, and herself in the hands of an executioner; let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as a prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties, is a false religion.

After this detestable order, follows an account of the plunder taken, and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the profaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Verse 37, "*And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and three score and fifteen; and the beeves was thirty and six thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was three score and twelve; and the asses were thirty thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was three score and one; and the persons were thirty thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two.*" In short, the matters contained in this chapter, as well as many other parts of the Bible, are too horrible for humanity to read, or for decency to hear; for it appears from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women children, consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses, was thirty-two thousand.

People in general know not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought

Pharaoh, of Egypt, was marching against them; they raised the siege, and retreated for may here be proper to mention, in order to stand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar besieged and taken Jerusalem, during the reign of Jehoiakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; it was Nebuchadnezzar who had made king, or rather viceroy; and that this is the sequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will in some measure remove the suspicion that affixes itself to Jeremiah being a traitor, and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar; whom Jeremiah calls in the 43d. chapter, the servant of God.

The 11th verse of this chapter, (the 11th) "And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem, that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem, to go (as this account states) into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself from the midst of the people; and when he was in the land of Benjamin a captain of the ward was then named Irijah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans: then Jeremiah said, It is false, I fall not to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah being thus accused, was, after being examined in prison, on suspicion of being a traitor, continued, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah, which has no connection with this account, but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the 21st chapter. It is there stated that Zedekiah sent Tashur, the son of Shephaniah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the prophet, to inquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem; and Jeremiah said to them, ver. 8, "The Lord, Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death; he that abideth in the land shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and

oe; but he that goeth out and falleth to the
 Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his
 life shall be unto him for a prey "

This interview and conference breaks off ab-
 suddenly at the end of the 10th verse of the 21st chap.;
 such is the disorder of this book, that we have
 us over sixteen chapters upon various subjects
 order to come at the continuation and event of
 conference; and this brings us to the first
 of the 38th chapter, as I have just mentioned.
 The 38th chapter opens with saying, "Then
 Elishah, the son of Mattan; Gedaliah, the son
 of Ahikam; and Jucal, the son of Shelemiah; and
 Pashur, the son of Malchiah; (here are more per-
 sons mentioned than in the 21st chapter) heard the
 words that Jeremiah spoke unto the people, saying,
 saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city,
 shall die by the sword, by the famine and the pes-
 tence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans
 shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and
 his life shall be unto him for a prey; (which are the words of the conference)
 before (say they to Zedekiah) We beseech thee,
 do not put this man to death, for thus he weakeneth
 the hands of the men of war that remain in this
 city, and the hands of all the people in speaking
 words unto them; for this man seeketh not
 the welfare of the people, but the hurt;" and at the
 10th verse it is said, "Then they took Jeremiah,
 and put him into a dungeon of Malchiah."

These two accounts are different and contradic-

The one ascribes his imprisonment to his
 attempt to escape out of the city; the other to his
 preaching and prophesying in the city; the one to
 being seized by the guard at the gate; the other
 to his being accused before Zedekiah, by the
 officers.*

observed two chapters, 16th and 17th, in the
 book of Samuel, that contradict each other
 respect to David, and the manner he became ac-
 counted with Saul; as the 37th and 38th chapters
 of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with
 respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

... bring him unto me
of his servants, and said, Be-
of Jesse, the Bethlemite, tha
and a mighty man, and a m
in matters, and a comely p
with him ; wherefore Saul
Jesse, and said " Send me Da-
21,) David came to Saul, and
he loved him greatly, and h
bearer ; and when the evil sp
Saul, (v. 23,) David took his h
his hand, and Saul was refres

But the next chapter, (17) i
different to this, of the manner
became acquainted. Here it i
encounter with Goliah, wher
his father to carry provision to
camp. In the 55th verse of th
" And when Saul saw David g
Philistine (Goliah) he said to A
the Host, Abner, whose son is
Abner said, As thy soul liveth,
tell. And the king said, Inqu
the stripling is. And as David
slaughter of the Philistine, A
brought him before Saul, with t
listine in his hand ; and Saul sai
son art thou young man ? And
" I am the son of th-

chapters, particularly the 37th and 38th, the chapter begins as if not a word had been said re subject ; and as if the reader was to be informed of every particular respecting it ; for it begins saying, ver. 1, " In the ninth year of ah, King of Judah, in the tenth month, came nabuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, Jerusalem and besieged it," &c. &c.

The instance in the last chapter (the 53d,) is more glaring ; for though the story has been repeated over and over again, this chapter still supposes the reader not to know any thing of it, for it begins saying, ver. 1, " Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign in Jerusalem,

his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Ishmael of Libnah, (ver. 4.) and it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, nabuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched the camp, and built forts against it," &c. &c.

It is not possible that any one man, and more especially Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man to write in such a disordered manner, nobody would read what was written : and every body would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. It is very likely, therefore, to account for this disorder, that the book is a medley of detached unconnected anecdotes, put together by some stupid compiler, under the name of Jeremiah ; because the events refer to him, and the circumstances of his times he lived in.

As to the duplicity, and of the false predictions of the book, I shall mention two instances, and then I will review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him, and at the interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the king of Babylon.

" If," says he (ver. 17,) thou wilt assuredly surrender unto the king of Babylon's princes, then

... me to return to Jonat there. Then came all the prince and asked him, and he told the words the king had comma man of God, as he is called, could strongly prevaricate, when he answer his purpose; for certainly Zedekiah to make his supplication make it; he went because he was employed that opportunity to ad surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In the 34th chapter. is a prophecy of Zedekiah, in these words [ver. 2.] : Lord, Behold I will give this city in the king of Babylon, and he will burn it, and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, thou shalt surely be taken and delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. word of the Lord; O Zedekiah, thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die, but thou shalt die in peace; and the wives of thy fathers, the former kings before thee, so shall they burn odors for thee, they will lament thee, saying, Ah, we have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.

Now instead of Zedekiah behold the king of Babylon.

it is there said [ver. 10] "That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What then can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?

For Jeremiah, he experienced none of those

He was taken into favor by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard, [chap. xxxix. ver. 12.] "Take him [said he] well to him, and do him no harm; but do him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah committed himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and about prophesying for him against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem, as it was besieged. Thus much for another of the prophets, and the book that bears his name. We have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because these two are spoken of in the books of Kings and Chronicles, which the others are not. The reader of the books ascribed to the men called prophets, I shall not trouble myself much about; I will take them collectively into the observations I offer on the character of the men styled prophets.

In the former part of the Age of Reason, I have observed that the word prophet was the Bible word for prophet, and that the flights and metaphors of the Jews have been foolishly erected into what are called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in my opinion, not only because the books called prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by prophet.

I have also said, that the word signifies a player upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances; such as that of a com-

the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music ; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things, was not a prophet but a seer,* (4 Samuel chap. ix. ver. 9 ;) and it was not till the word seer went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards) that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the modern meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time ; and it became necessary to the inventors of the gospel to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the times of the New ; but according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophet, so far as the meaning of the word seer was incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it ; such as the event of a battle, they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to

besides this general character of all the prophets they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and they prophesied for or against one party to the party they were with; as the poets and political writers of the present day write in defence of the party they associate with and against the other.

The Jews were divided into two nations, the tribe of Judah and of Israel, each party had its prophets who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, &c.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This prophesying shewed itself immediately on the occasion under the first two rival kings Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed, or prophesied, against the altar that Jeroboam had built at Bethel was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way-laid, on his return home, by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him, (1 Kings, chap. x.) "Art thou the prophet of God that came from Judah? and he said I am."

Then the prophet of the party of Israel said unto him, "I am a prophet also, as thou art (signifying the party of Judah) and an angel spoke unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink wine; but (says the 18th verse) he lied unto him." The event, however, according to the story, is that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who no doubt, was called a prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of Kings, a story is related of prophesying or conjuring, that shews several particulars, the character of a prophet, the prophet Elisha, king of Judah, and Joram, king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance; and these two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting and marching their armies, the story says they were in great

distress for water, upon which Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said, here is Elisha. (Elisha was of the party of Judah.) And Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said, The word of the Lord is with him." The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "What have I to do with thee, get thee to the prophets of thy father and the prophets of thy mother. Nay, but, said the king of Israel, the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of the king of Moab," (meaning because of the distress they were in for water; upon which Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look towards thee nor see thee." Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance, or manner of prophesying.

Ver. 15. "Bring me, said Elisha, a minstrel: and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that

n to this story of Elisha's two she bears as there is
 o that of the dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said :

Poor children three devoured he,
 That could not with him grapple ;
 And at one sup he eat them up,
 As a man would eat an apple.

There was another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions ; but whether by night or by day, we know not. Those, if they were not quite harmless, were not little mischievous. Of this class are

Ezekiel and Daniel : and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, are they genuine? that is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof; but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follows : First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c. &c. prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, &c.

Secondly because they were not written till after the Babylonish captivity began; and there is good reason to believe, that not any book in the bible was written before that period; at least, it is proveable from the books themselves, as I have already shewn, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written, agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would have greatly improved their intellects, in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their

invention, as they have done, to no purpose ; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write, respecting their own affairs, or those of their friends, or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest ; for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions ; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretend to have dreamed dreams, and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose, that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they meant, and that it was not intended any body else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Bab-

his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that by the cherubim he meant the temple at Jerusalem, where they had figures of cherubim? and by a wheel within a wheel, (which, as a figure has always been understood to signify political contrivance,) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book, he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem, and into the temple: and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says, (chap. xliii. ver. 3) that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar; which indicates, that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances, as far remote even as the present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely any thing can be more absurd, than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was overrun, and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely any thing I say, can be more absurd than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time, nothing is more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but if we are to use the books as prophecies they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel speaking of Egypt, it is said,

(ver. 11,) "No foot of man should pass through it, nor foot of beast should pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited for forty years." This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the Age of Reason I have spoken of Jonah, and of the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule, if it was written to be believed; or of laughter, if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow any thing.

But, as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job, and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible are originally Hebrew, or only translations from books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews; and that it has been written as a fable to expose the nonsense and satirize the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet, or a predicting priest.

him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag, and Moses by the women and children; they endeavoured to save him though at the risk of their own lives; for the account says, "Nevertheless, (that is, though Jonah was a Jew, and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes, and the loss of their cargo,) the men rowed hard to bring the boat to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them." Still, however, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution; and they cried, (says the account,) unto the Lord, saying, "We beseech thee, O Lord, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." Meaning thereby, that they did not presume to judge Jonah guilty, since that he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen upon him as a decree of God, or as it pleased God. The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshipped one Supreme Being, and that they were not idolaters, as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing, and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea; where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We are now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without any connexion or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile, who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on (taking up at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet,) saying, "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."

...crying, "Nineveh shall be overthrown."

We have now to consider this
ary in the last act of his mission ;
the malevolent spirit of a Bible
predicting priest, appears in all
character, that men ascribe to the
the devil.

Having published his prediction
says the story, to the east side of t
what ? not to contemplate, in retire
of his Creator to himself, or to oth
with malignant impatience, the des
evah. It came to pass, however, i
lates, that the Ninevites reformed, ac
cording to the Bible phrase, repented
he had said he would do unto them,
This, saith the first verse of the las
pleased Jonah exceedingly and he w
His obdurate heart would rather tha
should be destroyed, and every soul, y
perish in its ruins, than that his pre
not be fulfilled. To expose the char
phet still more, a gourd is made to g
night, that promiseth him an agreeab
the heat of the sun, in the place to v
tired ; and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becom
and he is ready to destroy his
said he

said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night ; and should I not spare Ninevah, that great city, in which are more than threescore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?"

Here is both the winding up of the satire, and the moral of the fable. As a satire, it strikes against the character of all the Bible prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded ; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to sucking infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, that there are more than threescore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left, meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the Creator for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction ; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right, hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction, or sees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgments, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecution. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of the Age of Reason, and already in this : where I have said that the word prophet is the Bible word for poet ; and that the flights and metaphors, of those poets, many of which are become obscure by the lapse of time, and the change of circumstances, have been ridiculously erected into things called

...the lesser propriety
already shown that the greater
would be cowardice to disturb the
the ones. Let them sleep, then, in
nurses, the priests, and both be for

I have now gone through the
would go through a wood with an ax
der, and fell trees. Here they lie ;
if they can, may replant them. 'T
haps, stick them in the ground, but
er make them grow.—I pass on to the
New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament, they tell us
upon the prophecies of the Old ; if so
low the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a w
be with child before she was married,
son she might bring forth should be ex
unjustly ; I see no reason for not be
such a woman as Mary, and such a ma
and Jesus, existed ; their mere existen
ter of indifference, about which there i
either to believe, or to disbelieve, and
under the common head of, It may be
then ? The probability how
were such

son Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.

It is not then, the existence, or non existence of the persons that I trouble myself about ; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend. The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene. It gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married, and while under this engagement, she is, to speak plain language, debauched by a ghost, under the impious pretence, [Luke, chap. i. ver. 35,] that "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Notwithstanding which, Joseph afterwards marries her, cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into intelligible language, and when told in this manner, there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it.*

Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture ; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God, that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is, upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda, or Jupiter and Europa, or any of the amorous adventures of Jupiter ; and shows, as already stated in the former part of the Age of Reason, that the Christian faith is built upon the Heathen Mythology.

As the historical parts of the New Testament, so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to a very short space of time, less than two years, all within the same country, and nearly to the same spot, the discordance of time, place, and circumstance, which detects the falacy of the books of the Old Testament, and proves them to be impositions, cannot be expected to be found here in the same abundance. The New Testament, compared with the Old, is

* Mary the supposed virgin mother of Jesus, had several other children, sons and daughters. See Mat. xii. 55, 56.

...that the di-
or a story proves the whole
agreement does not prove t
ment proves falsehood positi
The history of Jesus Chri
four books ascribed to Matth
John. The first chapter of i
giving a genealogy of Jesus
third chapter of Luke, there is
ogy of Jesus Christ. Did the
not prove the genealogy to
might, nevertheless, be a fabri
contradict each other in every
falsehood absolutely. If Matt
Luke speaks falsehood; and if
Matthew speaks falsehood: and
thority for believing one more th
is no authority for believing eit
cannot be believed even in the ve
say, and set out to prove, they are
believed in any thing they say af
is an uniform thing; and as to ins
elation, were we to admit it, it is i
pose it can be contradictory. Eith
called apostles were impostors, or t
ed to them have been written by oth
fathered upon them, as is the case o
ment.

The book of Matthew
genealogy

Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes there to be forty-three generations, besides which there are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison have placed them both in the same direction, that is from Joseph down to David.

Genealogy, according to Matthew.	Genealogy, according to Luke.
Christ	Christ
2 Joseph	2 Joseph
3 Jacob	3 Heli
4 Matthan	4 Matthat
5 Eleazer	5 Levi
6 Eliud	6 Melchi
7 Achim	7 Janna
8 Sadoc	8 Joseph
9 Azor	9 Mattathias
10 Eliakim	10 Amos
11 Abiud	11 Naum
12 Zorobabel	12 Esli
13 Salathiel	13 Nagge
14 Jechonias	14 Maath
15 Josias	15 Mattathias
16 Amon	16 Semei
17 Manasses	17 Joseph
18 Ezekias	18 Juda
19 Achaz	19 Joanna
20 Jonathan	20 Rhesa
21 Ozias	21 Zorobabel
22 Joram	22 Salathiel
23 Josaphat	23 Neri
24 Asa	24 Melchi
25 Abia	25 Addi
26 Roboam	26 Cosam
27 Solomon	27 Elmodam
28 David*	28 Er

* From the birth of David to the birth of Christ upwards of 1080 years ; and as the life-time of Christ is not included, there are but 27 full gener-

Now, if these men, Matthew :
 with a falsehood between them,
 counts shew they do,) in the ver-
 of their history of Jesus Christ, a
 of what he was, what authority, (a
 asked,) is there left for believing t
 they tell us afterwards? If they
 ed in their account of his natural
 are we to believe them, when they
 the son of God, begotten by a gho

ations. To find, therefore, the ave
 person mentioned in the list, at th
 son was born, it is only necessary
 by 27, which gives 40 years for ea
 the life-time of man was then but
 tent it is now, it is an absurdity to
 following generations should all b
 before they were married; and the
 we are told that Solomon, the next
 David, had a house full of wives
 fore he was 27

ere is neither agreement nor connexion between them."

in another place, addressing himself to the readers of those books, as being the word of God, says, "It is thus that your predecessors have in the scriptures of our Lord, many things, though they carry his name, agree not with the scriptures. This is not surprising, since that we often proved that these things have not been said by himself nor by his apostles, but that for the greatest part they are founded upon tales, upon reports, and put together by I know not what persons, with but little agreement between them; which they have nevertheless published under the names of the apostles of our Lord, and have thus added to them their own errors and their lies."

The reader will see by these extracts, that the veracity of the books of the new Testament was doubted, and the books treated as tales, forgeries, and that the time they were voted to be the word of God.

But the interest of the church, with the assistance of the faggot, bore down the opposition, and last suppressed all investigation. Miracles were added upon miracles, if we will believe them and were taught to say they believed, whether believed or not. But (by way of throwing in a nut) the French revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles: she has not been able, with the assistance of all her power, to work one miracle since the revolution began, and as she never stood in greater need than we may, without the aid of divination, conclude that all her former miracles were tricks and

I have taken these two extracts from Boulanger's Life of Paul, written in French; Boulanger has taken them from the writings of Augustine against the Jews, to which he refers.

Boulanger, in his Life of Paul, has collected the ecclesiastical histories, and the writings of the fathers, as they are called, several matters, which shew the opinions that prevailed among the different sects of Christians, at the time the Testa-

Certainly we are we to believe the said whom we never saw, told nor when, nor where? He ent is it, that the same ci weaken the belief even of be given as a motive for beli upon the face of it every to sibility and imposture.

The story of Herod desti under two years old, belongs of Matthew : not one of the re about it. Had such a circum universality of it must have the writers ; and the thing striking to have been omitted or tells us that Jesus escaped cause Joseph and Mary were to flee with him into Egypt ; b any provision for John, who v years of age. John, however, fared as well as Jesus who fled story circumstantially belies its

Not any two of these writer exactly in the same words, the short as it is, which they tell us when he was crucified : and says, He was crucified at the the morning ;] and John says i [twelve at noon.]*

* According to John 4:1-6 till about 12 noon.

The inscription ~~is~~ thus stated in those books.

Matthew—This is Jesus the king of the Jews.

Mark—The king of the Jews.

Luke—This is the king of the Jews.

John—Jesus of Nazareth king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only one of the men, called apostles, who appears to have been near the spot, was Peter: and when he was accused of being one of Jesus' followers, it is said, [Mat. chap. xxvi. v. 74] "Then Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man:" yet we are now called upon to believe the same Peter, convicted by their own account of perjury. For what reason, and on what authority shall we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances that they tell us attended the crucifixion, are differently related in those four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says, "There was darkness over all the land from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour—that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—that there was an earthquake—that the rocks rent—that the graves opened, that the bodies of many of the saints that slept arose and came out of their graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Such is the account which his dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives; but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the

execution could not be till afternoon; but Mark says expressly, that he was crucified at the third hour [nine in the morning,] chap. xv. 25; John, chap. xix. ver. 14.

... extraordinary that
should get abroad of the per-
and become afterwards the
books ascribed to Matthew,
Each writer told the tale as
bouts, and gave to this book
or the apostle whom tradition
witness. It is only upon this
traditions in those books ca
and if this be not the case, th
positions, lies, and forgeries,
pology of credulity.

That they have been written
as the foregoing quotations me-
enough. The frequent refere
chief assassin and impostor, Mo
called prophets, establishes this
other hand, the church has comp
by admitting the Bible and the
to each other. Between the Chi
Christian Gentile, the thing call
the thing prophecied; the type, a
fied; the sign and the thing signifi
dustriously rummaged up, and fit
old locks and pick lock keys. Th
enough told of Eve and the serpe.
enough as to the enmity between m
(for the serpent always bites about t
it cannot reach higher : and th
the ...

en made into a prophecy, a type, and a promise; and the lying impositions of Isaiah, That a virgin shall conceive and bear as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the was that he was defeated, (as already noticed observations on the book of Isaiah,) has been ted, and made to serve as a winder up.

ah and the whale are also made into a sign or

Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave: said, (and they have made Christ to say it of f.) Matt. chap. xvii. ver. 40, "For as Jonah ree days and three nights in the whale's belly, all the Son of man be three days and three in the heart of the earth." But it happens ardly enough that Christ, according to their count was but one day and two nights in the ; about 36 hours instead of 72; that is, the night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; ey say he was up on Sunday morning by se, or before. But as this fits quite as well as e and the kick in Genesis, or the virgin and n in Isaiah, it will pass in the lamp of ortho- ings. Thus much for the historical part of estament and its evidences.

stles of Paul.—The epistles ascribed to Paul, fourteen in number, almost fill up the remain- rt of the Testament. Whether those epistles ritten by the person to whom they are as- , is a matter of no great importance, since iter, whoever he was, attempts to prove his ne by argument. He does not pretend to een witness to any of the scenes told of the ection and the ascension; and he declares e had not believed them.

story of his being struck to the ground as he urneying to Damascus, has nothing in it mi- us or extraordinary; he escaped with life, at is more than many others have done, who een struck with lightning: and that he l lose his sight for three days, and be unable or drink during that time, is nothing more

...preach.
as well of action as

The doctrine he advances this as an example much will men differ and in the conclusion premises, that this is the same body, so if immortality, appears against it; for if I have and am raised again I have died, it is presumed die again. That resurrection against the repetition when past, secures me believe, therefore, in more elevated idea than is contrary of the resurrection

Besides, as a matter of course I had rather have a better nient form than the present creation excels us in so many respects, without mentioning over more space, and very minutes, than man can the smallest fish, in progress in motion almost beyond weariness. Even the

and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now, if the writers of these four books had gone into a court of justice to prove an alibi (for it is of the nature of an alibi that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body by supernatural means,) and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropt for perjury, and would have justly deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books, that have been imposed upon the world, as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just alluded to.

"Now, says he, (that is, after the conversation the women had had with the angel sitting upon the stone,) behold some of the watch (meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre) came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done; and when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, that his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept; and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying (that his disciples stole him away) is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The expression, until this day, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew, was not written by Matthew, and that it has been manufactured long after the times and things of which it pretends to treat; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of any thing happening in our own time. To give, therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least for this

That the consciousness
dependent on the same form o
monstrated to our senses
tion, as far as our senses
that demonstration. A ve
animal creation preaches to
the belief of a life hereaft
sembles an earth and a h
future state ; and comprises
ed, immortality in miniatur

The most beautiful parts
eye are the winged insects,
ginally. They acquire tha
brilliancy by progressive cha
creeping caterpillar-worm of
days to a torpid figure, and a s
and in the next change comes
ture magnificence of life a sp
resemblance of the former cre
thing is changed ; all his pow
is to him another thing. We
the consciousness of existenc
this state of the animal as befo
believe that the resurrection c
necessary to continue to me t
existence hereafter.

In the former part of the Age
called the creation the only tr
God : and shi :

According to Matthew the eleven were marching to Galilee, to meet Jesus in a mountain, by his own appointment, at the very time when, according to John, they were assembled in another place, and that not by appointment, but in secret, for fear of the Jews.

The writer of the book of Luke contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does ; for he says expressly, that the meeting was in Jerusalem the evening of the same day that he (Christ) rose, and that the eleven were there. See Luke, chap. xxiv. ver. 13, 33.

Now is it not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of wilful lying, that the writer of these books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples ; for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven ; yet the writer of Luke says expressly and John implies as much, that the meeting was, that same day, in a house in Jerusalem ; and on the other hand, if according to Luke and John, the eleven were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven ; yet Matthew says, the meeting was in a mountain in Galilee : and consequently the evidence given in those books destroys each other.

The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee ; but he says, chap. xvi. ver. 12, that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in another form to two of them as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story, in which he keeps Christ employed the whole of the day of this pretended resurrection, until the evening, and which totally invalidates the account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He, says, that two of them, without saying which two, went that same day to a village called Emmaus, threescore furlongs (seven miles and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ, in disguise, went with them, and staid with them unto the evening, and

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I now come to the last scene, the
sion into heaven. Here all fear of
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mission of the disciples was to rest for
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last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute ; and that it should be as I have stated in the former part of the Age of Reason as public and as visible as the sun at noon day : at least it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point.

In the first place the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it ; neither does the writer of the book of John. This being the case is it possible to suppose that those writers, who affect to be even minute in other matters, would have been silent upon this, had it been true ? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen as if he was tired of romancing, or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two, there is not an apparent agreement, as to the place where this final parting is said to have been.

The book of Mark says, that Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat ; alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem ; he then states the conversation that he says passed at that meeting ; and immediately after says (as a school-boy would finish a dull story) " So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God." But the writer of Luke says, that the ascension was from Bethany ; that he (Christ) led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them there, and was carried up into heaven." So also was Mahomet, and as to Moses, the apostle Jude says, ver. 9, That Michael and the devil disputed about his body. While we believe such fables as these, or either of them we believe unworthily of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ; and when it is considered that the whole space of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem : it is, I believe impossible to

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But to return to the subject. I
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Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not acted in concerted imposition, but each writer, separately and individually for himself, and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the one, applies equally to prove both cases; that is, that the books were not written by the men called apostles, and also that they are not a concerted imposition. As to inspiration, it is altogether out of the question; we may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood, as inspiration and contradiction.

If four men are eye witnesses and ear witnesses to a scene, they will, without any concert between them, agree as to the time and place when and where that scene happened. Their individual knowledge of the thing, each one knowing it for himself, renders concert totally unnecessary; the one will not say it was in a mountain in the country, and the other at a house in town; the one will not say it was at sun rise, and the other that it was dark. For in whatever place it was, at whatever time it was, they know it equally alike.

And, on the other hand, if four men concert a story, they will make their separate relations of that story agree, and corroborate with each other to support the whole. That concert supplies the want of fact in the one case, as the knowledge of the fact supercedes, in the other case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove there has been no concert, prove also that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact (or rather of that which they relate as a fact,) and detect also the falsehood of their reports. Those books, therefore, have neither been written by the men called apostles, nor by impostors in concert. How then have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called wilful lying, or lying originally; except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament: for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases, it is not difficult to discover the progress, by which even simple supposition, with the aid of cre-

sons. In cases of this kind, charity stretches on a little and a little farther, till it reaches a certain truth. Once start a ghost, and it fills up the history of its life, and of its appearance ! one tells it one way, till there are as many other ways, till there are as many ghosts and about the proprietor of them are about Jesus Christ in these fables.

The story of the appearance of Christ told with that strange mixture of truth and falsehood, that distinguishes legends, is possible, that distinguishes legends. He is represented as suddenly coming out when the doors are shut, and of his own sight, and appearing again, as one of an unsubstantial vision ; then again sits down to meat, and eats his supper with them. who tell stories of this kind, never the cases, so it is here : they have told he arose he left his grave clothes behind them, they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterwards, or tell to him with them when he ascended ; whether he went all off, or went up clothes and all. Elijah, they have been careful enough to throw down his mantle ; how it happened, burnt in the chariot of fire, they also tell us. But as imagination is so strong in this kind of story,

w Testament has existed ever since the time of Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses have existed ever since the time of

But the fact is historically otherwise ; there is no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ was to have lived.

At that time the books ascribed to Matthew, Luke and John, began to appear, is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least proof of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and it might as well have been called by the names of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian Church existing, more than the two tables of stone written on, and intended, by the finger of God, upon mount Sinai given to Moses, are in the possession of the

And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the hand writing in either case. At the time those books were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them scriptures. Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty, to commit himself and his man, upon such precarious means as these, and it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make nor alter, nor add, so much as one blade of grass that he has decreed, and yet we can make or alter words of scripture as easily as words of man.*

The former part of the Age of Reason has not been published two years, and there is already an edition in it that is not mine. The expression in the book of Luke was carried by a majority of one only. It may be true but it is not I that have

Some person, who might know of the circumstance, has added it in a note at the bottom of one of some of the editions, printed either in England or America ; and the printers, after that,

his crime or for his enmity

Those who preach this doctrine, are in general the enemies, and they act consistently by trine is hypocritical, and it is should act the reverse of what own part, I disown the doctrine a feigned or fabulous morality not exist that can say I have a set of men, either in the American case, returned evil for evil. But on man to reward a bad action to return good for evil; and this is a voluntary act, and not a duty to suppose that such doctrine is a revealed religion. We imitate the Creator by forbearing for he forbears with all; but it imply that he loved man, not was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of we must see there is no occasion revealed religion. What is it? Does not the creation, the universe preach to us the existence of a God that governs and regulates the world the evidence that this creation senses in it.

Here we are. The existence of an Almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves, and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also that the power that called us into being, can, if he please, and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and, therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know before hand that he can. The probability, or even possibility of the thing is all that we ought to know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere slaves of terror; our belief would have no merit; and our best actions no virtue.

Deism then teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the hand-writing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter, will, to a reflecting mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in, and which it is proper we should be in, as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, or even the prudent man who would live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and of the obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a Trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs

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Were man impressed as fully and strongly as he ought to be, with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is Deism.

But when according to the Christian Trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another part called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold man in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and it admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science, without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore studying nothing.

Instead then of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted, and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The princi-

* The book called the book of Matthew, says, c. iii. ver. 16, that the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove. It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. The second of Acts, ver. 2, 3, says, that it descended in a mighty rushing wind, in the shape of cloven tongues: perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards.



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Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it ; because he has the knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch, or an acre of ground, will measure millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter, has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship, will do it on the ocean ; and when applied to what are called heavenly bodies, will ascertain to a minute, the time of an eclipse, though these bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin ; and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, that teacheth man nothing.*

* The Bible makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation : and in doing this, they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun ; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night—and what is called his rising and setting, that of morning and evening. Besides, it is a puerile and pitiful idea, to suppose the Almighty to say "Let there be light." It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjurer uses, when he says to his cups and balls, Presto, be gone—and most probably has been taken from it, as Moses and his rod are a conjuror and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime : and by the same rule the conjurer is sublime too ; for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's sublime and beauti-

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ry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude as for human improvement.

It will perhaps be said, that if such a revolution in the system of religion takes place, every man is brought to be a philosopher.—Most certainly, every house of devotion a school of science. As seen by wandering from the immutable principles of science, and the right use of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make good the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the author of a new religion, to supercede and expel Jewish religion. And to find pretence and advantage for these things, they must have supposed God's power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher says that the laws of the Creator have never changed with respect either to the principles of science or the properties of matter. Why then is it supposed they have changed with respect to religion?

I now close the subject. I have shewn in all the foregoing parts of this work, that the Bible and the traditions are impositions and forgeries; and I have produced the evidence I have produced in proof of it to the satisfaction, if any one can do it; and I leave the reader to draw what are suggested in the conclusion of the work to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as it is, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

FINIS.

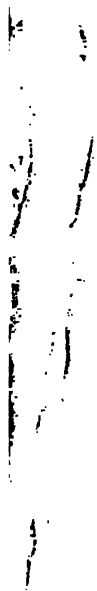


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even this erroneous motive in him, makes no motive for love on the other part ; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties, that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed ; and if they could be, would be productive of evil ; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim of doing as we would be done unto, does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies ; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies, are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing ; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part, I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality ; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any set of men, either in the American Revolution, or in the French Revolution ; or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil ; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the Creator by forbearing with each other for he forbears with all ; but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such a thing as revealed religion. What is it we want to know ? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an Almighty power that governs and regulates the whole ? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than any thing we can read in a book, that any impostor might make and call the word of God ? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in

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